

EXHIBIT

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Jan 21, 2011

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House Bill 7
January 28, 2011
Presented by Bruce Rich
Long Range Planning Committee

Mr. Ms. Mrs. Chairman and committee members, I am Bruce Rich, Chief of Fisheries for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here to provide information in support of House Bill 7. We are requesting \$300,000 for the Big Spring Creek PCB Remediation Project. This is the Big Spring Creek which originates southeast of Lewistown then runs through town and eventually drains into the Judith River. PCBs were once added to paints as a biocide and to enhance plasticity. For decades, we unknowingly applied PCB-laden paint to the raceways of the Big Springs Creek State Fish Hatchery, which is located at the upper end of Big Spring Creek. Over the years, through maintenance and cleaning of raceways, much of the paint flaked off and entered Big Spring Creek. The link between this contamination and the hatchery was discovered in 2003, and since that time it has been established that the worst contamination is limited to the upper 2.77 miles of stream. Within this reach there is a health risk to aquatic life and fish from exposure to the PCBs in the creek. Fish in the creek bioaccumulate considerable levels of PCBs and pose a health risk to humans if consumed. Because of this risk with consumption, the creek has been under catch-and-release fishing regulations since 2004.

The cleanup and disposal of PCBs is regulated through the federal Toxic Substance Control Act, and regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Our agency has worked with the EPA, a local advisory committee, and landowners along the creek to create a cleanup (or remediation) plan. This plan calls for using suction dredging to remove the fine materials in the top six inches of the stream-bottom, which holds the majority of the PCBs. By removing a high percentage of these fines, we will reduce PCB levels to the point that the risk to aquatic life and humans is reduced below a level of concern.

In 2010, the EPA issued FWP a letter approving the use of suction dredging to remediate the PCBs. We just recently went out for bid to accept proposals from contractors to do this cleanup. The cost of the cleanup is estimated to be \$5.07 million. The majority of the money needed for cleanup costs have been acquired, leaving a remaining balance of \$1.07 million. The \$300,000 from the RDG fund would help offset this remaining balance, with additional funds still needing to be acquired from money generated from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses.

Big Spring Creek is truly a jewel of central Montana and treasured by the residents of Lewistown, who on their own, and in conjunction with FWP and other partners have done much to improve the health and public use of this waterway. Also, the creek is literally a lifeline for the community, as it serves as the city water supply. The PCB contamination impairs these efforts and uses, and these cleanup dollars, if approved, will help assure the aesthetic and economic viability of the creek for the community and all Montanans.

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